

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1149

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USNAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY

UNCLAS BELFAST 14

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: ULSTER REACTION TO GOVERNMENT RECALL OF CONVENTION

REF: BELFAST 13

1. TOTAL ABSENCE VIOLENT INCIDENTS ULSTER NIGHT JAN.12-13 INDICATES PROVINCE DEGREE OF INTEREST IN AND PREOCCUPATION WITH GOVERNMENT TREATMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION REPORT. WITH EXCEPTIONS LOYALISTS SAMMY SMYTH, REVEREND IAN PAISLEY AND ERNEST BAIRD AND OF PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN, REACTIONS TO STATEMENTS BY PRIME MINISTER AND SECRETARY OF STATE MERLYN REES GENERALLY TEMPERATE AND CAUTIOUSLY FORWARD-LOOKING. P.M. DESCRIPTION OF TIGHTENED SECURITY MEASURES IN SOUTH ARMAGH AS SEPARATE STATEMENT FROM REES TREATMENT OF POLITICAL SUBJECTS EMPHASIZED DUAL MESSAGE TO ULSTER POLITICIANS. IN EFFECT BRITISH WILL DO ALL POSSIBLE TO ASSURE PHYSICAL SECURITY WHILE ULSTER POLITICIANS MUST CONCENTRATE ON FINDING FORMULA THAT CAN EVOLVE INTO LONG TERM POLITICAL SOLUTION. FAVORITE TAG LINE BELFAST COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA MORNING JAN. 13 WAS THAT "BALL BACK IN ULSTER COURT."

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2. FROM TEXT OF ADDRESS, NEWS REPORTS OF DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT

AND TELEVISED AND PRINTED INTERVIEWS WITH ULSTER POLITICIANS, CONGEN CONCLUDES SECSTATE REES PRESENTATION OF GOVERNMENT VIEWS ON CONVENTION REPORT, CULMINATING IN RECALL OF CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION FOR ONE MONTH PERIOD FROM FEB. 3, WAS MASTERFUL. HE HIT ALL RIGHT NOTES POSSIBLE. THESE RANGE FROM EMPHASIZING HMG DETERMINATION TO STAY THE COURSE THROUGH HIGHLIGHTING AREAS OF AGREEMENT AMONG ALL PARTIES ULSTER TO DEEMPHASIZING IRISH DIMENSION AND CONDITIONING PARTNERSHIP IN GOVERNMENT ON ALLEGIANCE TO THAT GOVERNMENT AND SUPPORT FOR ITS SECURITY FORCES. REES MADE "PRIME REQUIREMENT.... MORE WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE OF ANY PROPOSED SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT PROVIDING FOR SOME FORM OF PARTNERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION." HE THEN PROPOSED THAT CONVENTION CONSIDER THREE MATTERS: "...COMMITTEES AS PART OF A WIDER AND ACCEPTABLE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK WHICH PROVIDES ADEQUATELY FOR PARTNERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION -- THE MATTER OF MORE WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE - AND THE MATTER OF WHETHER PROGRESS COULD BEST BE MADE ON AN EVOLUTIONARY BASIS." ALTHOUGH PAISLEY, BAIRD AND SAMMY SMYTH CONDEMN THIS AS A COVER TO IMPOSE "REPUBLICANS IN GOVERNMENT", HARRY WEST OF OFFICIAL UNIONISTS AND GLENN BARR OF ULSTER DEFENSE ASSOCIATION INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO EXPLORE FURTHER. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY LEADERS ALSO INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO RESUME TALKS "IMMEDIATELY."

3. ONE MONTH IS NOT VERY LONG FOR ULSTER POLITICIANS PUBLICLY TO REACH TENTATIVE AGREEMENT ON FORM OF DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT. GIVEN THE STARK ALTERNATIVE FOR THEM OF INDEFINITE DIRECT RULE IT COULD BE LONG ENOUGH. DEVELOPMENTS OVER PAST YEAR INCLUDING IN CONVENTION HAVE CAUSED BOTH VISIBLE AND IMPERCEPTIBLE SHIFTS IN POLITICAL ATTITUDES IN ULSTER. CLEAR INDICATIONS THAT GOVERNMENT WOULD ACCEPT TEMPORARY FORMULA (SUSCEPTIBLE TO EVOLUTION) SUCH AS COALITION WITH LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE SYSTEM WILL BE TEMPTING TO BOTH MODERATE UNIONISTS AND MINORITY PARTIES. ATTITUDE AND ACTIONS OF EXTREME NATIONALISTS WILL REMAIN FACTOR. RUARI O'BRAIDAIGH OF PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN IS QUOTED JAN. 13 AS HAVING BRANDED THE "DEAL ON THE SIX COUNTIES" A HOLDING OPERATION TO POSTPONE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF BRITISH INTENTIONS TO LEAVE IRELAND FOR GOOD. AS THIS TELEGRAM DRAFTED BOMB EXPLODED IN DOWNTOWN BELFAST. FIRST REPORTS INDICATE IT PLACED IN SHOPPING ARCADE.

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